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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: MODIFICATIONS TO THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM*

1. In response to advice offered by Heads of Departments and Offices at both Headquarters and overseas duty stations and feedback from individual staff who have participated in the performance appraisal system training, and in recognition of concerns expressed by staff in various meetings as well as through their staff representatives, the following modifications are being introduced to both the training for and the implementation of the performance appraisal system.

2. These modifications have been approved by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, on behalf of the Secretary-General, and will be reflected in an administrative instruction to be issued after consultation at the forthcoming session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee, to be held in Amman from 5 to 9 June 1995.

3. The changes described in the present information circular do not affect the substance of the performance appraisal system approach, but rather aim to simplify it, reduce the length of the reporting form and reflect other suggestions made, in particular by staff who have undergone training (to date, some 2,000 staff members world wide). The modifications will be communicated to staff, including those who have completed training already, and will not require any additional training. The new form will be finalized and issued as soon as possible, as will detailed guidelines revised to reflect the changes announced in the present circular.

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* Personnel Manual index No. 12015.

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Phase-in implementation period

4. The performance appraisal system implementation date is modified as follows. The effective start-up date for performance appraisal system implementation world wide will be changed from 1 April 1995 to 1 July 1995. However, those departments/offices that are already committed and ready to begin implementation as of 1 June 1995 may proceed as planned.

5. Headquarters departments/overseas offices will determine the performance year that suits their work programme best, limited to two options:

(a) The calendar year (January-December), to coincide with the programme budgets and medium-term plan cycles;

(b) An April to March performance year, intended to take pressure off the year-end and closing of the General Assembly period.

6. For managerial and supervisory staff from the under-secretary-general to the G-7 level who have received training, the period from 1 July 1995 (or 1 June as appropriate) to the beginning of the next performance year as established by each department/office (January 1996 or April 1996) will be considered a transition period. The emphasis during this period will be on ensuring that work units of all sizes and individuals proceed with establishing goals and work plans and on initiating the performance-based feedback and other communications needed for the performance appraisal system. During this transition period, the following will apply:

(a) For departments/offices selecting the calendar year, in early October 1995, supervisors should conduct a brief mid-point review to confirm the work plan and to discuss performance to date as measured against it. At the end of December 1995, supervisors should conduct a performance appraisal dialogue covering the preceding six months' work plan. A performance rating, based on the level of satisfying this work plan including performance dimensions as agreed upon, should be established during this appraisal session;

(b) For departments/offices selecting an April to March performance year, the mid-point review should be completed during November, the appraisal should be discussed and the rating established by the end of March 1996 as described in subparagraph (a) above;

(c) For this transition period, the resulting appraisal ratings will not be recorded in the official status files of individual staff members concerned, but rather will serve to guide work planning for the future and to provide an indication of the level of performance achieved during the initial period;

(d) The current performance evaluation report will continue to function for all staff until the beginning of the formal (as opposed to transitional) performance year selected by the department/office.

Training and implementation dates for non-supervisory staff members

7. The following applies to all staff within the categories described below:

(a) Non-supervisory staff at overseas offices will receive one day of performance appraisal system training beginning in October 1995;

(b) Non-supervisory staff at Headquarters, in view of the pressure of work during the General Assembly period will receive one day of performance appraisal system training beginning in January 1996.

Modifications to the reporting form and process

8. The following modifications are being made:

(a) The reporting form will be significantly shortened and simplified, making it possible to consolidate in one place the listing of goals and performance dimensions of a staff member's individual work plan;

(b) One consolidated mid-year review will be recorded, covering performance included in the work programme;

(c) The year-end review will be recorded in one space and will cover all goals and performance dimensions included in the work programme;

(d) Instructions will be simplified and consolidated on a separate page attached to the form itself;

(e) Space will be made for a second reporting officer to evaluate the performance and the appraisal rating at the time of the year-end review;

(f) While supervisors will be required to review together with each staff member performance against each of the work plan goals, they will not be required to indicate individual ratings for each one on the form. Instead, the performance rating will reflect performance in terms of the total work plan.

9. On request, additional consulting services in goal-setting and work-planning will be given to departments/offices at the level of work units before 1 July 1995. Furthermore, the Office of Human Resources Management will begin a "people management training" programme during the second half of 1995 for staff world wide at the D-1 and D-2 levels. This training will seek to develop management skills in such areas as communications, including listening, and direction as well as in other managerial competencies relative to the management needs of the Organization, including implementation of the performance appraisal system.

10. In the coming weeks, the Office of Human Resources Management will issue a booklet further explaining the performance appraisal system. The booklet will seek to give all staff, especially those non-supervisory staff members who have not as yet received training, a better sense of what performance management in general, and the United Nations performance appraisal system, in particular, is all about.

11. These modifications are intended to assist all managers/supervisors and non-supervisory staff members in introducing a better system with a more gradual introductory/transition period, including added time for goal-setting and work-planning. In so doing, it aims to make the performance appraisal system a useful performance management tool, both for the output of the Organization as a whole and for each individual staff member.